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NEA FOR FRONT OFFICE, NSC FOR ABRAMS/DORAN/LOGGERFO

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TAGS: [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [KWBG](#) [KPAL](#) [KDEM](#) [IS](#)
SUBJECT: YASSER ABED RABBO: MAKING THE CASE AGAINST HAMAS

REF: JERUSALEM 001644

Classified By: Consul General Jake Walles, per reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

¶1. (C) Summary. During an April 24 meeting in Ramallah with the Consul General, PLO Executive Committee (PLO-EC) member Yasser Abed Rabbo argued that President Abbas (Abu Mazen) and Fatah needed a more coherent strategy to deal with Hamas and gain support among the public. Abed Rabbo said that the time had come to expose the failings of the Hamas-led government to the Palestinian public and suggested that a proposed national dialogue would provide such an opportunity. Abed Rabbo conceded that Abu Mazen and Fatah had yet to articulate a clear alternative vision to Palestinians. End summary.

Mishal's Comments
Ignite Fury in Fatah

¶2. (C) PLO-EC member Yasser Abed Rabbo criticized the comments of Damascus-based Hamas leader Khaled Mishal deriding Abu Mazen and Fatah (reftel). However, Abed Rabbo also called the subsequent violence a "total mess," adding that the clashes, which he attributed to Fatah and some unaffiliated armed gangs, were not an effective way to respond to Mishal's comments.

¶3. (C) Abed Rabbo argued that the Palestinian public is ripe for alternatives to the agenda currently espoused by Hamas. The Hamas-led PA government seemed incapable of adjusting to the current political/financial crisis. At the same time, a sizable percentage of the Palestinian public continued to hold on to the hope that Hamas would somehow be able to deliver on its promises. Abed Rabbo noted, however, that a growing segment of the public harbored doubts on Hamas' ability to deliver. Mishal's statements provided the best opportunity to drive that message home to Palestinians, Abed Rabbo said, but not through violence.

Proposed National Dialogue

¶4. (C) In the wake of the Mishal statements, Abed Rabbo said that the PLO-EC convened April 21 to discuss with Abu Mazen -- prior to his departure to Turkey -- a proposal by Hamas PLC Speaker Aziz Dweik to hold a national dialogue including Hamas, Fatah, and the other Palestinian factions. Abed Rabbo considered the offer an excellent opportunity to turn the tables on Hamas and show the Palestinian public that Hamas lacked a realistic policy. Palestinians needed to be convinced that Hamas is failing and isolated, despite supposed assurances of support from Iran and Syria, and would

not succeed in delivering on its promises. The challenge would be to show Hamas' inflexibility and to emphasize that "our way is credible," Abed Rabbo said.

15. (C) Abed Rabbo said he believes Abu Mazen should lead the dialogue and include representatives from the PLO-EC and the different parliamentary factions. Abed Rabbo suggested that the talks could begin early next month upon Abu Mazen's return from abroad. Through this national dialogue, Abed Rabbo thought Abu Mazen could impose the framework of the discussions and thereby expose Hamas intransigence. As for an agenda, Abed Rabbo thought the dialogue should focus on maintaining the PA and overcoming the political and financial crisis. Ultimately, according to Abed Rabbo, the objective should be to create a government committed to Abu Mazen's program. Abed Rabbo thought that the Hamas leadership in Damascus would not like the idea of a dialogue inside the West Bank and Gaza that would not include them.

Abu Mazen, Fatah
Need to Step Up

16. (C) Abed Rabbo approved of Abu Mazen's public response to Mishal's statements but said more effort is needed to strengthen the President's office and Fatah. Abed Rabbo argued that Abu Mazen should spend more time on articulating a positive message for Fatah and working on building an effective Fatah infrastructure. He noted that Hamas had five or six capable spokesmen, whereas Fatah relied on aging and out-of-touch representatives to convey its message. More focus was needed on enlisting the next generation of Fatah activists capable of articulating ideas to Palestinians.

17. (C) Abed Rabbo indicated that more effort should be made on building effective institutions around Abu Mazen in the President's office. Abu Mazen needed to decide on a National Security Advisor and establish a credible team of economic advisors, as Muhammad Mustafa was ineffective. Preparation is key, Abed Rabbo said, in order to respond to possible opportunities for dialogue with the new Israeli Government. Abu Mazen also needed to follow a consistent policy and to go out of his way and present his views directly to the public.

WALLES